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OPEDA

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Organization of Professional Employees
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The year 1951 will doubtless be remembered as a year of problems—local, national, and international. OPEDA was not without its share. Some solutions—tentative or partial—have also been achieved—some of them not fully in keeping with the hopes of many of us, but rather better than at times appeared likely.

The year 1952 gives promise of being another year which, considered from nearly any point of view, will challenge our wisdom, or perseverance, and our patience. Your officers will continue their best efforts to carry out the policies of your organization, but I will invite all members of OPEDA to help, by more active participation at every point.

I should like on this occasion to acknowledge my deep appreciation for their work during the year to the Chairman and members of our Stand-

ing Committees to whom credit belongs for much of whatever we have accomplished:

To Mr. Franklin Van Sant, chairman of the Membership Committee, and his associates, for pressing enthusiastically among the professional people of the department the opportunity of service through OPEDA.

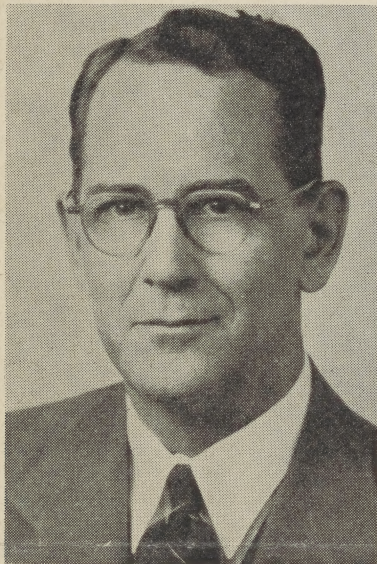
To Mr. Ralph Sherman, Chairman, and the members, of the Committee on Economic Criteria, for examining in detail and preparing specific recommendations on a number of issues of critical interest to professional members of the Department.

To Dr. Carl Taylor, Chairman of the Committee on Professional Criteria, and to the members of his committee for presenting effectively the essential ingredients of the highest professional standards.

To Dr. Carl Colvin, Chairman of the Committee on Working Criteria, and

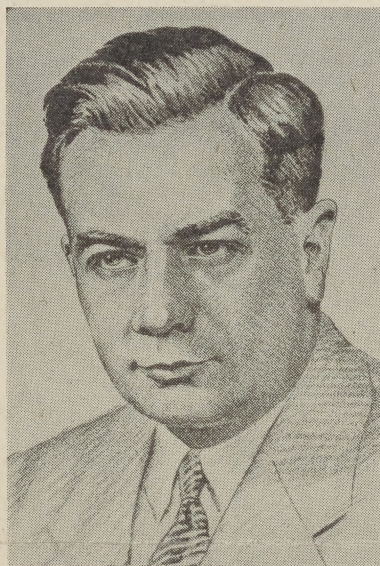
to members of his committee, for a trail blazing study in the field of promoting the most effective use of professional staff in the Department service. A preliminary report from the committee is presented in this issue of OPEDA. I commend it to your attention and invite comments.

Finally, this word would be incomplete without an expression of sincere appreciation, not only on behalf of myself, but on behalf of the entire membership, to Dr. Frederick V. Rand, whom we are fortunate to have as Executive Officer, for his energy, enterprise, and tireless perseverance in keeping close watch on legislation of importance, in effectively presenting to committees of Congress the recommendations of OPEDA, and in furthering in every way, often entirely on his own time, the work of the organization.—*B. Ralph Stauber, President.*



C. K. MORRISON, Vice. Pres.

Mr. C. K. Morrison was born and raised on an Oklahoma farm. He received the B.A. degree from the University of Oklahoma and worked on newspapers in Oklahoma for several years. Entering the Department in 1935 as Purchasing Agent for the Milwaukee Office of the Bureau of Agricultural Engineering, he transferred to Dayton, Ohio, with the Soil Conservation Service in 1939, to Upper Darby, Pa., in July 1942, and to Lincoln, Neb., in December 1942. He became Regional Personnel Officer for Farm Security Administration at Lincoln, Neb., in 1945; and transferred to Washington as chief, Employment Section, Farmers Home Administration, in 1947, and to Production and Marketing Administration as Staff Assistant to Chief, Office of Personnel Management, in October 1950.



B. RALPH STAUBER, Pres.

Mr. B. Ralph Stauber came to the Department 20 years ago, after receiving his M.A. degree from Minnesota. He served as Economist in Land Economics with primary responsibility for Land Value activities. Special work has included supervision of land appraisal for the Fort Peck Dam in Montana. Later, as a member of the Office of Land Use Coordination he assisted in coordinating departmental land use credit programs. During World War II he served with the War Relocation Authority. He returned to the Department in 1946 as head of the Division of Agricultural Price Statistics. He is on the teaching staff of the Graduate School and has been a member of the Departmental Committee on Mathematics and Statistics since 1946.



THELMA A. DREIS, Sec.-Treas.

Thelma A. Dreis grew up in St. Augusta, Minn., where her father was a farmer as well as the miller. She holds B.S., M.A., and Ph.D. degrees. She taught in Minnesota and Iowa schools with one year in the Panama Canal Zone. In 1930 she joined the staff of the Institute of Human Relations of Yale University where from 1933 to 1935 she directed the Social Background Studies. She entered the Department in 1936 and became Assistant Director, then Director, of the Southeastern region for the Study of Consumer Purchases. In 1938 she transferred to the Federal Surplus Commodity Corporation to plan a national survey of commodity distribution. In 1941 she joined the Nutrition Division of the Office of Defense Health and Welfare Services. She is still with that unit, now titled the Nutrition Programs Service of the BHN&HE.

MEMBERS OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE FOR 1952

John W. Asher, Jr., REA Chief, Personnel Div.	Verna C. Mohagen, SCS Chief, Personnel Management Div.	Frederick V. Rand, OPEDA Executive Officer
Thomas H. Bartilson, BAI Asst. Chief, Animal Husbandry Div.	C. K. Morrison, PMA Asst. to Chief, Off. Personnel Mgt.	Walter M. Scott, AIC Assistant Chief
Thelma Dreis, BHN&HE		Harry C. Trelogan, ARA Asst. Research Administrator
C. O. Henderson, PERS Chief, Div. of Training	B. A. Porter, EPQ Head, Div. of Fruit Insect Invest.	B. Ralph Stauber, BAE Head, Div. of Agric. Price Statistics

MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL FOR 1952

Agric. Economics Irvin Holmes† Charles E. Burkhead† Patrick E. O'Donnell*	Dairy Industry Raymond W. Bell† George P. Sanders*	Farmers Home Admin. Ralph A. Picard† Mrs. Ann E. Howard† Melvin V. Cole*	PISAE Dr. Wm. J. Zaumeyer† Harry L. Garver† E. E. Clayton† Robert E. Wester*
Agric. & Ind. Chem. G. W. Irving† E. J. Coulson† John Matchett*	Ento. & Plant Quar. Ralph W. Sherman† Horace S. Dean† Mrs. Ruth L. Busbey† Robert H. Nelson*	Food & Drug Admin. V. E. Munsey† Sumner C. Rowe*	Prod. & Mktg. Admin. Clyve W. Jackson† C. B. Gilliland† C. B. Ingram† G. E. Gaus*
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Animal Industry Dr. Asa Winter† Dr. H. R. Bird† Dr. John R. Scott† Miss Sally Miller*	Extension Service Fred C. Jans.† Madge J. Reese† Harlan L. Shrader*	Forest Service Roy A. Chapman† Perry B. Hinkleman† Otto A. Zimmerli† Miss Doris W. Hayes*	Soil Cons. Service Eugene J. Peterson† Wendell R. Tascher† Bert D. Robinson† U. S. Allison*
Commodity Exch. Auth. Mrs. Helen Sachleben† R. Corbin Dorsey*	Farm Credit Admin. Kenneth L. Scott† J. Kenneth Samuels† E. C. Johnson*	Information Charles Arthur† Kenneth Gapen*	Library Mrs. Alice H. Wittwer†
			† Voting * Alternate

OPEDA'S FINANCIAL STATUS, DECEMBER 31, 1951

Assets	
Cash in bank	\$3,422.49
Petty cash	25.00
Total assets	\$3,447.49
Liabilities	
Withholding tax payable	\$101.20
Social security tax payable	25.44
Prepaid dues 1952 and 1953	2,220.00
Total liabilities	\$2,346.64
Surplus as of December 31, 1951	\$1,100.85

OPERATING RESULTS—MEMBERSHIP YEAR, 1951

Income	
Membership dues for 1951	\$5,090.00
Expenses	
Salaries	\$2,967.70
Printing and mimeographing	925.98
Addressograph service	194.85
Postage	310.35
Office supplies	62.83
Telephone	26.00
Social security expense	620.07
Miscellaneous expense	61.18
Total expenses	\$5,168.96
Operating deficit, 1951	(78.96)
Surplus carried over from 1950	1,179.81
Surplus, January 1, 1952	\$1,100.85

RETIREMENT LEGISLATION

In his statement of March 4, before Senate hearings on retirement legislation, the Executive Officer briefly summarized his presentation at the first session of this Congress. This included a reiteration of OPEDA's belief that any increases in annuities should be applied proportionately throughout the GS grades, without the cut-off at \$2,400 proscribed in the original bill, S. 995. He referred to the Consumers' Price Index as showing that for an employee retiring in 1935 the cost of living had now practically doubled; for one retiring in 1940, it had increased by four-fifths; and for one retiring as recently as 1945, it had increased by almost half. This means that the purchasing power of their annuities has decreased proportionately.

Two other points were forcefully stressed: (1) Since there is but little likelihood that S. 1019 could be passed currently as such, it was urged that the essential features of that bill be incorporated as subsections in section 2 of S. 995, thereby combining in a single bill two improvements in Civil Service retirement legislation fully endorsed by OPEDA. (2) It was also specifically urged that the formula for computing annuities be modified to eliminate the inequities in S. 995 to employees who have borne greater responsibilities and whose annual salaries exceed \$6,000.

▼ PRELIMINARY REPORT OF COMMITTEE ON WORKING CRITERIA

The general assignment of the OPEDA Committee on Working Criteria has been to consider the following areas of activity: (1) Adequacy of facilities requisite to satisfactory performance as related to research, office space, reference sources, equipment, laboratories, and supplies; (2) Constructive and qualified leadership, direction, and supervision; (3) Competency and qualifications of assistants; (4) Unmistakable definitions of purposes of assigned duties; (5) Clarity of specifications and instructions; (6) Supervisory acceptance of responsibility for supervisory decisions; (7) Optimum working periods and hours; (8) Equitable compensation for necessary overtime work; and (9) Recognition of personal circumstances as related to geographic assignments.

As one specific objective the Committee has been giving intensive study to the problems involved in promoting the most effective use of personnel with special attention to professional employees in the Department of Agriculture. This problem, always important in the public service, is increasingly so in days of increased diversion of personnel from peace-time to defense activities, and in days of restricted budgets for regular functions of the Department.

Recognizing the broad scope of this objective, the Committee felt the need of a systematic canvass of the views of employees as a means of locating areas in which greatest improvement might be practicable. Accordingly a questionnaire was distributed through the members of the Council to a sample group of professional employees to obtain their views on certain questions.

One hundred fifty questionnaires were returned, representing 18 agencies of the Department. Both field and departmental offices were represented. Three-fourths of those who replied are in grades GS-11 to 13 inclusive; 13 percent below GS-11, and 12 percent above GS-13.

The Committee realizes that the sample is relatively small, and accordingly has not stressed unduly the percentage of returns falling in particular categories. It does believe, however, that the cross section of staff represented warrants consideration of the areas of study suggested by the returns. The summary of the replies should be indicative of many problems facing professional employees, and it is hoped will be useful to employees in administrative positions as well as in the strictly professional positions in helping to make such adjustments as are possible to achieve an atmosphere conducive to the most effective service.

The replies to the questionnaire not only call attention to areas in which improvement is possible, but also give evidence of a genuine spirit of co-operation and a recognition of the responsibility of every employee to do whatever he can to accomplish results of the highest order. Analysis of the views of 150 professional and administrative employees shows an agreement on the basic principle that the

work of the Department is very largely a mutual enterprise involving both administrators and other personnel—that improvement is accordingly the responsibility of every individual. Each should constantly appraise his own peculiar conditions and his superiors should always maintain a sympathetic ear for these appraisals. In fact, each employee should be encouraged to submit his own ideas for improvement, both with respect to having some voice on suggestions in policy making and in working out directives once policy has been defined.

It is largely on the basis of the individual's accomplishment that the productivity of his particular unit depends. He should therefore be made to feel as completely at home in making suggestions as he would if he were a member of a committee. In some cases this objective can be accomplished in part by representation on committees at a wide range of levels. By the stimulation of active work-suggestion programs many Department units have already achieved close working relationships and a feeling of "belonging" among their employees. Where this has been accomplished, it reflects successful leadership, understanding, and stimulation on the part of someone at the top, for the morale of any group is largely in his hands and those of his principal assistants. Some replies have stressed the point that although the individual employee does share in general responsibility, that responsibility may be unnecessarily limited if he is not consulted on matters involving him and his work. Few things are so deadening to morale as for the employee to feel that his suggestions have been killed without ever having been seriously considered. In general, there is a feeling that the greater the independence of decision that can be given to an employee, consistent with over-all objectives, the greater will be his consequent feeling of responsibility. Supervisors can therefore foster an atmosphere of the employee "belonging" by assuring those under their direction that suggestions will receive due consideration by administrative officials at appropriate levels, with recognition accorded where due. The Committee recognizes that the departmental program of awards for meritorious service represents a step in this general direction. It suggests, however, that day to day recognition of the above principles, often in matters that individually seem quite small, will pay dividends over the long pull.

Seven basic working criteria were covered by the questionnaire. Analysis of the responses is discussed in the order in which each question appeared on the questionnaire.

Question 1. Which of the following, if any, do you find inadequate for the performance of your duties? (a) office space; (b) equipment; (c) supplies; (d) laboratories; (e) assistants. Rank according to importance those considered inadequate.

The loudest cry was for assistants. More than half of the 150 replies in-

dicated a shortage of assistants. Three-fourths of these ranked this item of greatest importance, the turnover among assistants being mentioned as a companion problem.

The need for secretaries was the most insistent, with the need for clerks, professional assistants, and miscellaneous groups mentioned in descending order of frequency.

Next came inadequate office space, specified by one-third of the respondents, and considered of greatest importance by 60 percent of these. One-fifth reported a shortage of equipment and a shortage of supplies; and inadequate laboratory facilities were mentioned as other limiting factors.

Additional space was provided on the questionnaire for listing any other inadequacies. The write-ins recommended improvement in library facilities particularly in offices far removed from central libraries, greenhouse space, field plots, photographic service, and travel facilities.

Question 2. Do you find existing regulations excessive? List in order of importance the main areas in which you are handicapped by regulations.

The Committee is fully aware of the necessity of procedures and regulations. Yet the replies to the questionnaire are a reminder of the need for allowing maximum flexibility consistent with necessary safeguards.

About 25 percent of those replying thought more effective work could be done if official regulations were less restrictive. Restrictive personnel regulations were mentioned most frequently, with those relating to supplies, administrative, operational, and budgetary procedures coming in for attention in that order.

In general, the response indicates that regulations regarding employment and personnel details are not sufficiently flexible to meet varying practical circumstances, with the result that program accomplishments are not always the best that the Department might offer to the public.

Replies indicated that more effective results could be attained if regulations that prescribe and limit the recruitment and release of personnel could be eased somewhat. This applies more particularly to scientific and technical workers, but also to clerical assistants to some extent. Some supervisors report that they actually shy away from disciplinary action or separation of incompetent personnel because of the regulations involved.

The new efficiency rating came in for its share of criticism. It was described as less effective and at the same time more cumbersome and time-consuming than the former system. The rating of "outstanding" is considered almost "unattainable" under its definition, and there was some opinion that the present plan leads to indifference or actual lowering of morale.

Restrictions on the purchase of supplies and equipment—especially for small items—are considered excessive, resulting in delayed action due to the time involved and the deterioration of morale. These suggestions were made prior to the issuance of the recent "Joint Regulation for Small Purchases

Utilizing Imprest Fund." (Federal Register of March 14.)

Administrative restrictions considered excessive include the frequent lack of authority for routine work during seasonal or annual periods when immediate action is necessary. At times the effectiveness of trips to field experiments is lost because of delay in travel approval. The need for close coordination between regional administrative officers and those in direct charge of research projects was stressed, in order that the confusion resulting from "dual control," "dual reporting," and the adding of a third party in dealing with personnel and payment of accounts may be avoided. This seems to suggest the need for time studies of various operations under different types of organization in order that the most efficient types may be identified. In the area of marketing and economic research it was suggested that the distinction between the advisory function of advisory committees and the control of research projects needs further clarification. It was also mentioned that coordination is sometimes difficult because of the necessity for going through so many channels that the need of contact becomes lost.

Some suggested that field instructions to workers are sometimes too technical and some parts are not always practical.

Several commented that too much time and too many people are involved in editing and clearing papers and reports for release or publication; and that editors should be sufficiently familiar with the fields of work to do constructive editing.

Others suggested that cooperation with co-workers could be facilitated if review of correspondence were limited to a reasonable minimum, and in particular, to those actually familiar with the problems involved.

Other comments suggested the need for periodic re-examination of the regulations governing cooperation with commercial firms and with farmers to insure maximum adaptability consistent with proper safeguards.

There was considerable comment on procedures for budget and project justification and estimates, difficulties and delays in getting approval of forms and questionnaires, restrictions on contacts without schedule clearance, and unfamiliarity with subject matter sometimes resulting in unwise procedures.

Question 3. Have you found it difficult to: (a) Exchange ideas with professional associates; (b) Keep abreast of professional literature; (c) Integrate additional academic training with your present occupation; (d) Publish or otherwise disseminate results of your work? Give reasons.

A relatively small number reported difficulty in exchanging ideas with professional associates. The following reasons were cited: insufficient group meetings; insufficient time; insufficient money for travel; lack of private office space, and the fact that

some specialists are administratively remote from others.

Eighty persons replied to subquestion (b). Seventy-eight of the 80 reported difficulty in keeping abreast of professional literature. In the majority of cases the difficulty is simply lack of time. Other reasons included inadequacy and inaccessibility of library facilities.

Ninety-three percent of the 43 who replied to subquestion (c) report difficulty in integrating additional academic training with present occupation. Those reporting difficulty charged it to lack of time; travel requirements; field location, lack of sabbatical leave, and miscellaneous reasons such as irregularity of work load and schedule, personal responsibilities, attitude of division chief, and lack of time and energy.

A number commented on difficulties in publishing or otherwise disseminating the results of their work. Aside from problems relating to the sheer pressure of day-to-day duties, major problems seemed to fall in two general categories: (a) lack of suitable media, and (b) difficulties in preparing and clearing manuscripts. Under (a) it was mentioned that the lack of an effective Government Journal for publication of research sometimes made it necessary for workers to pay the costs of publications, publish in journals with restricted circulation, or otherwise of "second-choice" caliber. Under (b) problems of editing, clearing, typing, and securing photographic service all contribute to delay and consequent "boggling down" of publication.

Question 4. Instability of funds not only affects morale but in many cases determines whether a project can be completed. Please give any examples you may have on how this condition has affected you or your associates and your appraisal of the extent to which it has resulted in an impairment of service to farmers or to the public generally.

The tremendous problems presented by instability of funds is so well known to administrators that comments on this question almost come in the category of "carrying coals to Newcastle." It is probably of significance, however, that apprehension on this score cuts deeply across the whole staff.

One hundred and twelve persons answered this question. Over 90 percent of these reported serious effects on the work of the Department due to instability of funds.

Many persons commented that assurance of adequate funds, or at least of a steady amount, is necessary for efficient planning and management of the work of the Department. Budgets are often not received in time to set up programs of operation, and lateness of annual appropriations renders it difficult to maintain an adequate staff for several important months of each year. Fluctuations in the financial support of programs interrupts the continuity of work, the success of which is dependent upon long-time

continuous information. Some of the Department's work is seasonal in nature and is most intensive at the very time the status of appropriations is most uncertain.

Cuts in funds or the necessity to absorb substantial new costs frequently result in highly trained skilled personnel spending too much time and effort in the performance of essential routine functions that should be handled by less skilled assistants. Reductions in personnel have been forced when increases rather than reductions were sorely needed. At the same time persons retiring and those recalled to military reserve duty could not be replaced because of restrictions on replacement of personnel. Termination of some projects before completion because of lack of funds causes a complete loss of work already done and is naturally very discouraging to those affected.

Many pointed out that the instability of funds inevitably lowers general morale, leading to a feeling of insecurity, uneasiness, lowered incentives, and sometimes a defeatist attitude. Some stated that in a reduction in force, frequently, the most competent employees cannot be retained. As explained by the various employees, this lowers quality of work and leads to a feeling of insecurity. It was pointed out that insecurity not only affects morale but tends to make Government research less attractive to young people.

Other matters mentioned by individuals commenting on the problem relating to the instability of funds included: (a) insufficiency of travel funds which cuts off contacts with farmers and other interested groups with whom a close contact is needed in order to know their needs and learn how to serve them better; (b) the importance of economies to be made in the proper timing and emphasis of activities to meet particular needs; (c) the effects of drastic reductions in fundamental research; (d) the importance of avoiding large backlogs of work which tend to waste motion and cause inefficiency in operation; (e) the real need for a nest egg of funds for meeting emergencies; (f) the importance of replacing antiquated and worn out equipment; (g) the difficulty of recruiting high-grade personnel on a year-to-year basis because of unstable funds.

Question 5. Is the effectiveness of your work limited because of unsatisfactory working relationships with professional personnel, administrators, program personnel, research workers, technicians, or other people? If yes, indicate what groups and in what ways.

While only one-sixth of the respondents reported unsatisfactory relationships under this heading, nevertheless, their comments relating to the following points may offer suggestions for improving relationships in the interest of better service.

1. Greater emphasis on principles, procedures, and policies, and in some cases less emphasis on the adminis-

trative setup would provide workers with the conditions and incentives for greater individual and collective efforts.

2. More extensive delegation of reasonable authority would often improve both the quality and quantity of work done by the professional employees.

3. Giving credit for work to the individual who is principally responsible creates initiative and promotes good relationship.

4. More frequent opportunities for individuals to discuss their problems with supervisors and policies with administrators would in some cases reduce apparent working at cross purposes.

5. Administrators should not stand in the way of free exchange of ideas among researchers in related fields, and research workers should be free to present their conclusions or to protest decisions without fear of reprisal.

6. There is constant need to protect key research and program people from "housekeeping" tasks that might be performed as well or better by non-technical personnel. There is also the need to keep reports to the minimum that is really necessary.

7. Coordination between different divisions of the same bureau engaged in allied activities and proration of new funds among all agencies logically concerned with the joint solution of a problem promotes cooperation and efficiency and enlarges the scope of work and the accomplishments desired.

8. It appears that some professional and technical personnel are subject to dual direction of their activities. While most activities are under the direct supervision of a specific unit, they are nevertheless subject to review and to change by other units or agencies. Every effort should be made to coordinate the various interests fully.

9. More emphasis should be placed on training of assistants in order that they may show their capacity for work and ability to carry on responsibilities which may be delegated to them.

Question 6. In your opinion, to what extent should the individual employee share the responsibility of creating satisfactory working conditions and improving the services which he is employed to render?

The answers to this question indicate that professional people are in general keenly aware of a real responsibility in their jobs and are usually ready to assume that responsibility. Their form of expression was, of course, highly variable.

Among the 122 answers to this question, a large number stated that the employee should give "100 percent cooperation." Other more specific suggestions regarding the extent to which the employee should share the responsibilities were: the opinion that the employee's responsibility is to make suggestions or give constructive criticism; those in higher grades are particularly responsible; the employee should use initiative in improving

methods; and the employee should share the responsibility equally with the supervisor. A few indicated that the employee should adjust himself to conditions in the light of organization policy; be responsible to the extent of contributing personally that which is jointly held desirable; be fully responsible for the creation and maintenance of pleasant and courteous working conditions.

The replies to question 6 may be summarized briefly as follows: It is the employee's responsibility, regardless of grade, to make suggestions for improvement which are, in his opinion, indicative of better ways of performing the tasks of the organization or of making it a more desirable place to work. He should be responsible for his work to the extent outlined in his job description, taking a professional attitude and performing with efficiency. He should use initiative to find new and improved methods of performing his duties. The extent of his responsibility should be discovered through maintaining joint responsibility with his superior. He should give criticism pro and con in the spirit of being constructive and at all times foster a cooperative attitude. He is definitely responsible for creating and maintaining courteous and pleasant working conditions.

Question 7. If you were able to have one single request filled that would contribute to more productive work, what would it be?

One hundred and thirty-eight persons replied to this question.

About one-fourth of the respondents reported their greatest need to be larger or more stable appropriations and cited examples such as: (1) Assurance of needed funds for solving a specific research problem of several years' duration without the leader having to give a major portion of his time to annual support of the budget and costly routine; (2) Assurance of sufficient funds to run projects to completion in an orderly manner; (3) A budget that would permit plans to be made with a sense of security so that research would not be placed on a hand-to-mouth basis, permit more adequate travel budget, provide for the purchase of the proper number of scientific periodicals, and a budget that would cover more than one year or at least an annual budget completed and approved two months before the beginning of the fiscal year. In general the suggestions were in favor of longer term plans being made possible by longer term budget commitments or similar provisions which might be worked out administratively.

Another 24 percent of the respondents expressed the need for more assistants as of highest importance to their work. Some specified more or better stenographic and clerical help and a few expressed the need for more professional, sub-professional, or technical assistance, stressing the importance of professional employees being free of strictly routine work that can be performed as well by employees in lower grades.

About one-fifth of those replying suggested that more attention be given to the details of program or-

ganization, citing as examples: (1) A better understanding of research work and a truer evaluation and appreciation of the results by administrators and others responsible for developing programs; (2) More opportunity for travel, conference, and meeting with the public we serve; (3) More team work and less pulling at cross purposes; (4) Research assignments of broad nature and freedom of action within broad programs to develop phases of projects in the light of current experience; (5) Establishment of firm policies and procedures that can be followed through to completion of a job without numerous changes unless such changes be based on changing needs growing out of experience; (6) An approved line of communication between line and staff officers; (7) More careful coordination by analysts and program officials so that when work is submitted for processing radical revision will be unnecessary; (8) Reduction of paper work at all levels; (9) More active participation of workers in the original planning of projects and opportunity to publish before results may become out of date.

About one-sixth ascribed highest importance to personnel matters, citing the following examples: (1) A true merit system based on ability and output is needed, with individual grade classifications according to responsibility and duties assigned; (2) All job vacancies might be posted on a bulletin board to give inside workers the first chance at them; (3) Make careers in research as attractive financially as are administrative careers in a research agency; (4) More choice in selecting, promoting, and releasing employees, particularly in cases where employees are incompetent or unable for one reason or another to perform satisfactorily; (5) The same pay for the same work to reduce the turnover of personnel by transfers within Government; (6) More assurance of continuity in agency services; (7) More in-service training for capable employees; (8) Individual recognition in writing from superiors for high-grade work. These suggestions cover a field in which much is being done and in which employees can contribute to a solution of many of the problems arising.

A relatively small number of the respondents assigned highest importance to physical facilities. The following examples are offered: (1) Moving the administrative office of a division nearer to Bureau headquarters; (2) More adequate working equipment; (3) Need for a minimum number of employees in rooms where creative work is undertaken, because of confusion, noise, and interruptions that result in lowered production, errors, and frayed nerves when several employees occupy the same office, particularly where professional employees have to share office space with clerical workers and machines. The Committee offers the suggestion here that effective acoustical treatment of rooms would doubtless repay itself in improved efficiency in many cases.

No doubt, many would agree with one worker who stated that his greatest need is for "More competence and wisdom on my own part."

▼ **SHOULD USDA PROFESSIONAL EMPLOYEES "SHOOT OR GIVE UP THE GUN?"**—For many years the Washington daily newspapers have detailed star reporters to specialize on Federal personnel and their daily columns are eagerly perused by scores of thousands of Federal workers. These men know their Congress; they are in constant attendance at committee hearings on bills affecting Federal employees, they enjoy the full respect and confidence of the staffs of these committees, and they are in close association with officers of the numerous Federal employee organizations. Their "off the record" knowledge of the evolution of Federal personnel policy probably surpasses that of any other coterie. They are often frankly critical of the Civil Service Commission; nevertheless that body makes available to them information of which many Federal employees otherwise would have little or no knowledge.

Three of these columnists, Kluttz (Post), Young (Star), and Lewis (Times-Herald), have been feature speakers at three OPEDA luncheons. On one point their several statements were in unanimous agreement, namely that the advances in conditions of Federal employment have not been due to spontaneous and gratuitous action by Congress, but have been achieved only by the aggressive and persistent efforts of groups of Federal workers, often in the face of adverse and discouraging circumstances. Their explanation of this circumstance is simple: A certain proportion of the electorate almost inevitably will oppose or disapprove of any change; consequently a member of Congress must be convinced of its equity and merit before he is justified in risking his political career by supporting it. And who should be primarily responsible for so convincing him? Obviously the Federal employees whose interests are at stake. If they manifest little or no interest in the proposed change that fact justifies the logical assumption that the proposal is unimportant or without merit.

Of all Federal employees the postal workers are by far the best organized. A half dozen or more of their associations maintain in Washington well staffed and financed offices in charge of men of outstanding personality and courage. Because of the large number of retirees who continue their active membership, one boasts of a membership which is 110 percent of the total number of the similar classes of employees in actual active service. When the postal employee groups speak Congress lends an attentive ear.

One of the largest of the postal associations is the Letter Carriers' Association. Its president is William C. Doherty. At the December 1951 meeting of the National Association of Retired Civil Employees he was the principal speaker. Two excerpts from

the printed report of his speech are germane to this discussion. They are as follows: "Mr. Doherty sounded another warning, which was that the degree of success in securing the approval of such legislation would be in exact ratio to the amount of effort and work exerted by those most intimately affected, i.e., those now on the retired rolls. 'Put yourself in the position of a Senator or Representative,' Doherty said, 'and ask yourself how much interest you would be inclined or disposed to show toward legislation for which there was no apparent interest on the part of those who stand to benefit by its enactment.' In other words, it was Mr. Doherty's considered opinion, based on past experience, that employees or persons who stand to benefit by proposed legislation must lead the fight . . . Continuing, he said, 'Congress is not likely to hand us an increase in retirement benefits on the proverbial silver platter; indeed, our job is to carry the fight to Congress, acquaint our friends there with some of the hardships our people are being forced to undergo . . .'"

At this point the attitude of the patient reader may be "hohum!" or "so what" or at least "what has all this to do with the caption of this item?" The tie-in is this: During the 23 years of OPEDA's existence a considerable proportion of the USDA professional employees have expressed a pronounced distaste for, some an absolute abhorrence of, any organized and systematic program to present their needs and views to Congress. That attitude is one major explanation of why only about 10 percent of the USDA professional employees are members of OPEDA. One can not question the sincerity of such doubts as to the ethical propriety of Federal employee action to influence the judgment of Congress, although one can meditate as to the ethics and equity of complete and enthusiastic acceptance of the benefits resulting from the programs aggressively promoted by the Federal employee minorities who were willing to fight for what they believed in. The situation almost reminds one of the old saying that "A wife may oppose the insurance of her husband's life, but a widow never does."

But dismissing that phase of the problem, there remains an important question as to whether the some 2,700 active members of OPEDA are employing it effectively as a means to advance their mutual interests as Federal employees. OPEDA is the embodiment of democratic processes and ideals. It is not dominated by any oligarchy or hierarchy; its elective processes, determinations of objective and policy, financial outlays, current procedures, legislative contacts, etc., are open to the full light of publicity, and it studiously shuns the slightest suggestion of threat or coercion. Yet

probably not more than one-tenth of its active members fully exercise their responsibilities and powers of membership. In extenuation, some explain that they do not desire that OPEDA should act like a labor union; others that they are fearful of penalty or reprisal. The latter factor can be dismissed as groundless; the right of petition is guaranteed by the Constitution, is unquestioned by the members of Congress, and has long been encouraged by the administration and by the Department of Agriculture. No man need hesitate to write to his Senator or Representative: "The enactment of the pending bill (identified by number or purpose) would be greatly to my personal advantage or benefit and I trust that you will give it your support," or "the enactment of the pending bill (identified by number or purpose) would be seriously detrimental to my personal interest and welfare and I trust you will oppose it." Thus put on notice, the Senator or Representative is in a far better position to reach a sound conclusion than he possibly could have been if the letter had not been written. Through the receipt of such letters he can ascertain the desires of his constituents and decide how he, as their representative, should vote.

So, in effect, the problem resolves itself into a single simple question: Should OPEDA act like a labor union, or should it not? Prerequisite to the answer there must be a dependable definition of the phrase: "Act like a labor union." What kind of a labor union is meant? It is a matter of historic record that many labor unions manifest many of the best attributes of human association, honesty, integrity, fairness, reason, logic, etc. Conversely, it is true that some have been coercive, arbitrary, autocratic, threatening, disregardful of broad public interest, misrepresentative. But the major trend has been toward statesmanship and diplomacy and away from the goon-squad, and the major role of the labor union in the promotion of social progress is now universally recognized.

In this era of drastic change, group action is the only effective medium for the translation of individual opinion or equity into workable measures of law or executive action. OPEDA is almost faced with necessity for a decision as to whether it hereafter is to be fish or flesh or good red herring; whether it is going to be willing to shoot or give up the gun. To the doubters the sound response appropriately might be: "Sure, OPEDA is going to act like a labor union, but only like a union of the highest type, one that conforms fully to the best principles of labor unionism, including sincere consideration of all elements of broad public interest." If, despite such an answer, a USDA professional employee still dissents, further argument will be useless.—L. F. Kneipp (former Executive Officer).

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